



## InHerit

Since the European Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) has been turned into the Erasmus+ programme in January 2014, InHerit, a Grundtvig Multilateral project that started in December 2013, was destined to be one of the last LLP projects to end in 2016. Today we can announce the completion of InHerit: the project has come to an end.

Educationalists, heritage professionals and interpreters cooperated in a project aiming at defining the competences and qualifications that mark the profession of heritage interpretation (HI) and at defining and supporting the path leading to professional development of heritage interpreters.

Today we can proudly present the fruit of our work: the outcomes and products of InHerit.

As a start the project team has developed a 'heritage interpreter competence profile', a reference framework for competences in the professional field of heritage interpretation. A next step was the creation of a training curriculum outline and guidelines for competence oriented training. This approach was tested in two pilot courses and applied in national training days.

All this work has led to a series of support material for heritage professionals and HI course organisers. On the project website: [www.interpretingheritage.eu](http://www.interpretingheritage.eu) you can find:

- The InHerit manual: Professional Development in Heritage Interpretation
- The InHerit brochure: Intro to Professional Development in Heritage Interpretation
- The Guidelines: Competence driven training for Heritage Interpretation
- The e-book: Digging Deeper - exploring the roots of heritage interpretation
- And many more texts, papers and training support documents.

Do you work in a park, an abbey, a monument, a museum ...? Are you a guide, a ranger, a manager, a PR person, an exhibition developer, a curator, a copy writer, an education officer ...? Are you interested in enhancing the experiences your visitors have at your site, in improving their connection with your site

and its goals, in improving their learning ... ? Do you simply want to know more about interpretation? Then please go to our website and consult the InHerit manuals and books. They are all downloadable for free in pdf and on-line readable via [issuu.com](http://issuu.com).

The InHerit team is convinced that natural and cultural heritage sites, monuments and museums offer the ideal context for visitors to connect with society and to learn, while heritage interpretation offers the ideal techniques to make this connection and learning as meaningful as possible. We hope that InHerit will contribute to the professional development of all people making this wonderful process happen.

On behalf of the InHerit team

Guy Tilkin, Alden Biesen  
InHerit coordinator



## Quality in heritage interpretation

What does successful interpretation look like (or indeed sound, feel, smell or taste like!)? And how do we know when we have experienced it? There are a number of general outcomes that we should be looking for when we evaluate the interpretation that we have provided at a natural/cultural heritage site:

- **Visitors (of all ages and abilities) are able to access the interpretation:**
  - Physically, this might be as straightforward as enabling visitors to get close enough to an interpretation panel (and to the feature being interpreted) to be able to read it. Or it might be about providing visual or auditory aids so that visitors with sensory disabilities can access the interpretation, for example audio descriptions of text on a panel, hearing loops, large print text.



Inaccessible interpretation panel, Matese Regional Park, Pangea Institute Archive

- Intellectually, this could mean a variety of things from providing foreign language translations of text or additional interpretation to overcome cultural barriers, to providing information that matches the reading age and comprehension of expected audiences.



Clear bi-lingual panel, Abisko, Sweden

- Emotionally, this means visitors have a response to the interpretation. 'A response' can mean a variety of things, from an increase in knowledge about the subject of the interpretation, to an emotional response, to a change in behaviour.
- Visitors acquire an appreciation of the heritage, and a desire to protect it
- The heritage asset is not threatened by the interpretation



Graphic panels around Stonehenge, Wiltshire, UK. The panels are portable to avoid excessive wear in one place around the monument and to avoid a need to dig into the archaeologically rich ground.

## Quality in heritage interpretation - continued from page 1

- Visitors' health and safety is not compromised by the interpretation. This might mean that the placement of a panel is a safe distance from the edge of a drop, or on even terrain, or for a guided tour it might mean that the guide is fully aware of all potential risks in the location that they are taking a group too – from fixed risks such as drops or poisonous flora, to transient risks such as inclement weather conditions.
- The interpretation is in line with the business case for the project/site – in other words it is delivered within constraints of budget and time and supports any increase in visitor numbers, income, etc established as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the project

The importance attached to these outcomes may vary from site to site, and from stakeholder to stakeholder, however they all require consideration for the delivery of successful interpretation. In addition, these outcomes should be found regardless of the type of site or the method of delivery for the interpretation.

## So how do we deliver these outcomes and produce successful interpretation?



More than just a panel. Tactile elements add to the interest and understanding of the themes discussed in panels at Tintagel Castle, Cornwall, UK

There are a series of questions that can be asked to determine the success, or otherwise, of a new interpretation scheme – be it a new guided tour, a single panel, an exhibition, or any interpretive intervention.

- Is a 'full' story available, including diverse perspectives and histories, not just the (current) accepted view?
- Is the content organised through themes? By structuring the content we make the key messages that we wish to communicate more readily accessible to our audiences.
- Is the content relevant to the audience(s) who will be accessing it? This requires both an understanding of the target audiences for the interpretation, and a willingness and an ability to action that knowledge to inform the content and presentation method used for the interpretation. In terms of audience understanding or insight, this should include demographic information such as age, gender, nationality, cultural background, but also in terms of the intellectual mind set of the audiences
- Is the interpretation sensitive to the heritage? (both in what it says and how/where it says it)
- Is the content engaging (relevant, provoking....)?
- Is the delivery method engaging? Many visitors are looking for a leisure activity, not a learning one, so we need to ensure we meet this need
- Is the interpretation sustainable? Both in terms of the environment and also financial return

If the answer to these questions is yes, then successful interpretation has been created.

As well as these generic characteristics, there are a number of specific elements that are needed to deliver a successful interpretation plan, guided tour, or panel.

## How do we make sure that our interpretation is successful?

In order to get evidence that our interpretive products are successful we should engage in an evaluation process.

- The first question to start an evaluation process is 'why'? Why do you, as an organiser, evaluate your interpretation activities/products?
  - To know the quality of these products/activities: are they attractive, motivating, accessible, understandable ... in order to improve your actions, products



Bad interpretation - crowded panel, Gotland, Sweden



Good interpretation panel, Patagonia, Pangea Institute archive

- To find out what people learned after taking part
- To find out what participants 'take home', what is the effect?
- To find the obstacles that hinder the achievement of certain outcomes
- .....
- The second question is: who do you address to get the right information? Possible stakeholders here are: the participants (visitors), the guide, the interpretive planner, other members of staff, a group of experts ...
- The how question refers to ways or instruments to collect data. All evaluation comes down to asking questions to get the right information, in whatever format these questions are raised. In view of the non-formal learning aspect of most heritage interpretations contexts, evaluation involving the visitors themselves, should be light, motivating and even fun. But still, one has to ask the right questions. In this respect it is important to think about what evidence (indicators) makes it clear whether the evaluated product or process is good enough? How do we know we do the right things and how do we know we do things right? A guide, offering personal interpretation, can, during the tour, easily probe through informal questions what the audience picks up or not. Possible evaluation techniques/tools are:
  - Questionnaire (most obvious, quantifiable results but usually not popular, boring)
  - Interview: individual or group with questions or storytelling
  - Observation (of behavior)
  - Short question board with emoticons as answers
  - A huge thermometer with good/bad indications and easy marking
  - .....

David Thomas, Interpretation Team Leader, English Heritage (UK)

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Go to [www.interpretingheritage.eu](http://www.interpretingheritage.eu) and find in-service training material, networking and course opportunities for your professional development in interpretation.



# The Swedish national training days

In the InHerit project each partner organised a 'national training day' following the principles of the project. The Swedish InHerit national training days were held on 11-12 May in Stockholm. It was the Swedish Centre for Nature Interpretation who arranged the course.

The course had 15 participants. They came from: regional authorities working with nature conservation and visitor centres; guiding companies and associations; museums and schools.

## The purpose of the day

To offer a training course for active guides where they would be able to develop their skills and activities with the help of interpretation and the results of the Inherit project.

## The learning objectives:

- To understand the principles of interpretation.
- Being able to use the principles in planning of guiding activities.
- Being able to produce a theme for guided tours within a well-known area and location.
- To understand how to perform the guiding in a relevant and enjoyable way.
- To get an overview of how to use props and media.
- Understand how to evaluate in order to improve the guiding.

## Course content

The course focused on letting the participants develop their guiding activities with the help of interpretation. A couple of weeks before the course the participants were asked to 1) submit information about their competence to SCNI and 2) to plan a short guided tour based on an item representing their 'home setting'/where they normally perform their guiding. This item was to be brought to the course.

### DAY 1

After a short welcome and introduction, the participants performed the guiding that they had prepared, about their item, in groups of three. The exercise was followed by self-reflection and peer reviewing. Then there were lectures and exercises about interpretation and theme development. In one of the exercises, participants discussed printed examples of interpretive boards and tried to figure out their themes. The discussions were held first in smaller groups, then all together.

In the exercise that followed, each participant developed a theme for the item that they had brought. The following slot was about participants sharing their experiences in different areas connected to guiding. In the course application they had stated what they wanted to learn during the course and what their skills were. From that we defined the areas for the exchange of experiences.

After that we held a lecture and exercises about interpretation planning, evaluation, reviewing and audience target groups.

Throughout the day, and after each slot of the course, the participants were given some time to reflect upon and write down what they had learned.

### DAY 2

We started the day with a lecture about guiding, including

practical suggestions on for example how to perform guiding with the participants in the focus of attention, connecting the theme with the participant, handling the group and using props.

After that, participants were allowed some time to plan a guiding based on their brought items – this time using their newly developed themes. We helped them and discussed their plans with them.

They then performed their guiding in small groups.

- the structure of the course and that they got a structure to work from
- the exchange of experiences
- the theme thinking
- guiding exercises (where they guided other participants)
- a lot of time for dialogue with other participants
- a lot of time for reflection
- variety between the parts during the course
- hands-on exercises
- the trainers



Directly after each guiding the guide evaluated his/her performance (1) and they did peer reviews (2). Each group told all participants some highlights from the guidings in their group.

Following that there was a slot for reflection: what have I learnt during the course? How will I use it when I come back to work? What do I want to learn more about? Participants had time to discuss among themselves and with trainers who gave advice on further training possibilities.

There was a reviewing exercise to sum up the experiences and to share the reflections made.

## How did you use the project experiences during the day?

We worked very hard to implement the competence oriented approach in the course. The guiding exercise was done twice. When, prior to the course, participants were asked to prepare a guiding, we wanted them to start thinking in terms of themes, even though we used other words than the word theme. We used the competence matrix when we planned the learning goals for the course.

## Result from the course evaluation

Overall the participants felt that their expectations were fulfilled. They particularly appreciated:

The participants felt that the following could be improved:

- too short slots for guiding and giving feedback to each other
- they would have wanted to perform a guiding a third time
- course too short
- hard to keep concentration at lectures with power point.
- too homogenous group.

## What we learned from organising the training days?

That while explaining the concept of themes is rather straight forward, time must be allowed for participants to fully grasp and take in the concept. Writing themes needs practice. One can almost never get too much of experience exchange. Organized forms for and exercises for this exchange is appreciated.

Feedback and follow-up after the course is also much appreciated: summaries of experiences made and results from exercises, further reading and reflections on things that came up during discussions.

The input from participants is a very valuable complement to lectures. Allow time for experience exchange, allow for several occasions for participants to guide one another.

Per Sonnvik, Lena Malmström, SCNI

# Reflections on the philosophy of heritage interpretation

Careful observation and meaningful reflection are the very heart of any true interpretive activity. Thus, heritage interpreters will also feel a desire to reflect by themselves on what heritage interpretation itself essentially means or could mean for those who visit heritage sites as well as for societies in plural democracies. Publications on this subject can serve as food for thought, they can provoke re-thinking our subject from different perspectives. But in the end each interpreter needs to reflect and probably re-consider from time to time his/her own understanding of interpretation. It is rather likely that this understanding evolves and changes over the years.

For heritage interpreters in Europe it can make sense to embed the philosophy of heritage interpretation in the contexts of philosophies and approaches to education that still play a vital role for this continent. How is heritage interpretation rooted in the movement of Enlightenment, and what did it inherit from the Romantics? What's the relation to formal education and to

progressive education? Does the total break-down of Western civilisation, the devastation of Europe by the Nazi-regime, mean anything for the role of interpretation in a human society?

These questions are highly relevant for a deeper understanding of the role heritage interpretation has, or should have, in present day Europe. Some initial thoughts on these questions that are meant to provoke further reflection have been outlined in the InHerit e-book: "Digging deeper - Exploring the roots of heritage interpretation". Inspired by these studies a chapter in the InHerit manual approaches the same theme from a more phenomenological approach. It explores what happens when

we experience natural and cultural heritage and how we make such experiences meaningful for the human individual and a human society.

Heritage interpretation, it seems from the perspective of these studies, offers very significant opportunities for education, especially for lifelong learning. Its potential for the greater society is largely underestimated by decision makers. Most interpreters would instantly agree to this statement. But, maybe, re-considering the philosophy of heritage could reveal that we ourselves underestimated the significance of heritage interpretation.

Patrick Lehnés



Read more about reflections on heritage interpretation in the InHerit manual and e-book on [www.interpretingheritage.eu](http://www.interpretingheritage.eu)

## InHerit experiences & Heritage Studies/Museology academic programmes

**Experiences gained within the InHerit project create important contributions towards desirable developments of heritage interpretation within a European context. But they also raise new and very important questions like: "How does heritage interpretation relate to (fit in) already established Heritage Studies/Museology academia and other programmes and trainings as well how can all interested partners/stakeholders contribute towards dominant trends and discussions within the heritage field?"**

The main goal was to use knowledge gained within the InHerit project and to apply it in an academic setting. While the main learning objectives of the course had not changed drastically, as they remained close to those defined in previous years, the methodology how to reach them was significantly different: a competence orientated learning approach was adapted and used. More precisely the set student's goals/learning objectives were as follows:

- students will be able to define basic ideas and concepts

whenever possible to gain better results and skipping loss of precious time, of course if the Faculty/University schedule permits it, which was not possible in our case.

As conclusion we may say that experimental implementation of the InHerit ideas and methodology proved to be successful and preferred by students, compared to 'traditional' ways of teaching/lecturing. As far as students' reactions are concerned, our understanding is that the InHerit competence



Guest lecture delivered by ex-students involved now in heritage interpretation business in Croatia.

While an important part of the project has been focusing on shorter training opportunities (with two very successful 3 days long pilot projects implemented in the United Kingdom in September 2015 and in Italy in November 2015) InHerit at the same time aims to impact, as far as heritage interpretation is concerned, on academia/university established bachelor or masters programmes in heritage or museum studies. Accordingly during the summer semester of the academic year 2015/2016 the InHerit partner, the University of Zagreb (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chair of Museology and Heritage Management) included in their regular lectures of the Master Study of Museology & Heritage Management the methodology as implemented by the InHerit project.

This Master study at the University of Zagreb has a long tradition; it is established in 1984 as an academically recognised Master of Museology which in 2006 became (as part of the Bologna Process) the Master of Museology and Heritage Management. From the academic year 2011/2012 the Master programme included an optional course in Heritage Interpretation. In the academic year 2015/2016, during the summer semester this course has been used as an experiment for the InHerit objectives.

within heritage interpretation;

- students will be able to explain advanced theoretical and practical knowledge connected with heritage interpretation;
- students will be able to analyse and explain advantages and drawbacks of diverse heritage interpretation methods, tools and techniques;
- students will be able to implement diverse heritage interpretation methods, tools and techniques in simulated situations (projects);
- students will be able to prepare a sketch of an interpretation plan;
- students will be able to prepare and present (a small scale) heritage interpretation project.

The 'InHerit course' lasted for 10 weeks, scheduled every week for 1,5 hours. In addition some more sessions were delivered as part of the course but in a conventional way: lectures and guest lectures. In total 14 students (all Master level) attended the course.

We may say that a great majority of our expectations has been very successfully reached, and with a positive impact on students. Still we strongly recommend implementing this kind of course in compressed form (e.g. five days in a row)



Group of students working on assigned task as part of the Heritage Interpretation course.

based way of learning makes a significant difference in students' motivation and interest toward dealing with heritage interpretation and the ways it could be realised.

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